

# **Implementation Sub-Committee Of The Task Force on Federal Legislation Of the Children's Cabinet**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**April 1, 2005**

**Meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM and promptly adjourned by the chair. (April Fools Day) Introductions were made.**

**1. Review and approval of 3/4/05 Minutes.**

**2. Update of Supportive Employment/Transitional Jobs Programs -  
Donalda Carlson**

**The employment support programs were initiated in December 2004. This timing, as it turned out, was less than propitious. The DHS Job Retention Unit (JRU), which plays a pivotal role in the operation of these two programs, was in the process of moving offices and did not have the use of telephones. Additionally, as with any new program, other start up issues, including severe weather conditions affected the overall engagement of parents into these two activities. Since December Diane Cook and Jeannette Cabral have been working to redress the problems related to startup. Focus has been to increase referrals and program retention. Although, the programs were to be for post 24-month clients it has been opened up to all FIP clients that**

can benefit from the services.

The process begins with the DHS Social Caseworker who refers clients to JRU for employment. The JRU evaluates the client and as appropriate refers the client either to a Supportive Work vendor or Transitional Jobs vendor. There is a very high no-show rate at each referral point. However, once the client is engaged in program activities they are likely to be very successful in their employment placements. Program providers will be invited to a WRITF meeting to present their various program models.

### **3. FIP Component Activity Report – Randy Rosati**

Randy Rosati presented a table reflecting the TANF countable activities and the number of FIP participants in each category by area office for December 2004. The total countable activity participants for December were 2100. Most of these participants, 1424, were in Employment. Also, represented on the list were the numbers of FIP participants in activities that are not TANF countable. There were a total of 971 such participants. Randy was asked to give a breakdown of the type of activity that these participants were in. He will provide that analysis at the next WRITF meeting. He surmised however, that most were in an education or training.

Randy was asked to provide March data at the next meeting and to add the length of time on assistance.

Randy then presented a table with the numbers of recipients with

**drug distribution and sale convictions who have accessed FIP and Food Stamps since the August 2004 change in legislation. One hundred and ninety one are now receiving benefits. The majority (115, 60%) became active in August and September.**

#### **4. Update on FIP Staffing (Current Number/Caseloads/etc.)– Ed Sneesby/Tina Janik**

**A table representing the number of FIP social caseworkers by office and average caseload was distributed to the group. Ed Sneesby stated that the focus of the past year was to redistribute staff to programs in need of additional staff. That meant that Child Care and Medical staffs were increased. This was accomplished as workers retired and were promoted. Field staff is in constant movement as workers are promoted and new staff hired. Tina Janik commented that although the goal is to achieve caseload equity it is not wholly possible since there is a need to have a minimum of three in staff per program in each local office. This is necessary due to vacations and illness. There needs to be enough staff to maintain office operations. A request was made to present the number of bi-lingual staff in each office and each job classification. Also, a table of the number of workers in other programs was requested as well.**

#### **5. Status on Proposed Changes to FIP Intake and Plan Development Process – Donalda Carlson**

**There have been some changes in the assessment and FIP plan development process. Many FIP participants are being tested as part of their assessment. CCRI is contracted to conduct the testing of clients and to provide interpreted results to the social caseworker and the client. This testing is used to develop an education and client's employment goal and to plan the steps that will be taken to achieve the goal.**

**Testing is offered in every local office on a regular basis. The scheduling is determined by the average need for testing in each office. In the Providence office testing is offered seven times a week. Five offerings are in English and two in Spanish. There is a high no show rate for the testing and this creates an artificial backlog (numbers expected versus numbers actually showing up). There is a plan to make testing a half day experience. CCRI Project Reach testers are working with field staff to make the testing experience useful for both the client and the worker. It is believed that clients need to be tested each year to gauge progress and update their FIP plan. Changes to the current process will have to be made if the proposed legislation that will require applicants for FIP to sign a FIP plan as a condition of eligibility is passed. It is possible that assessment and testing of clients would have to take place as part of the eligibility process. A new business plan would have to be developed. At present when an individual applies for FIP they are also applying for Food Stamps and Medical Assistance.**

**In the event the bill which proposes to make the Plan a condition of eligibility passes, assessment, testing, and plan development will**

have to be expedited to assure that eligibility is determined within the 30-day time limit. The advantage such a change to FIP is that the FIP and TANF clocks will run in tandem, there will be fiscal savings and clients will gain momentum as they enter FIP. This will require that applicants be moved along quickly and effectively and if there is any case where this activity cannot be carried out by the FIP Program within the mandated 30-day timeframe, the Department will not hold up eligibility determination on such cases. Much is being learned about scheduling testing that will be useful if the legislation passes. The LD project has been expanded to Newport and North Kingston. Clients who show indicators of learning disabilities during assessment are referred for further testing to ORS. Training of Social casework staff to identify possible learning disabilities has increased the number of referrals to ORS. At this time ORS has no backlog for setting up assessment appointments.

## **6. Update on TANF Reauthorization**

TANF has been extended to June 30, 2005. There is a subcommittee that will be meeting to prepare for the changes that may occur with TANF reauthorization. Some changes in the Senate bill include increased number of required participation in activities, a 24-month limit on training, measurement of client outcomes against the economy of the state.

## **7. Other Business**

**Linda Katz distributed a letter that she wrote to the Governor on behalf of the members of the WRITF. The letter requested that members of the WRITF be included in a group that the Governor plans to convene to study Rhode Island's entitlement programs.**

**Meeting adjourned at 11:00 AM. Next meeting will be held on May 6, 2005.**